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NSC BRIEFING

14 April 1954

MILITARY SITUATION IN INDOCHINA

I. French retaken important point at
Dien Bien Phu.

- A. Eliane subposition 1
wholly recaptured 10
April; counterattacks
thus far repulsed.
- B. Eliane 1 has commanding
view most of central defenses
and thus important observation
post for fire direction. Also,
Viet Minh can use fire down on
French. But it dominated by
enemy-held Dominique 2.
French retention Eliane 1
difficult unless can retake
Dominique 2.

NSA, DIA reviews completed

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- II. French established new strongpoint Lily from Huguette and Claudine to strengthen west defenses.
- III. French reinforced with another Foreign Legion battalion.
 - A. This drop took place 7-12 April.
 - B. This makes four battalions since middle March.

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IX. In rest of Indochina, enemy guerrilla
tactics, harassment continue.

A. Haiphong-Hanoi communications
repeatedly cut and enemy not
yet fully extended.

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- B. Vientiane airfield attacked
8 April by guerrillas. Not
very damaging but further
evidence coordinated Viet
Minh tactics, harassment
important installations,
spreading of French units.
- C. Concentration several Viet
Minh regular units east
Pleiku in Annam indicates
plan put pressure this area,
prevent transfer French units
to Tonkin.
- D. Two enemy battalions reported
heading toward Stung Treng in
Cambodia. Have evaded French
force of five battalions.

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X. In connection Cambodian participation against Viet Minh invaders, some of king's extremist advisers balked at proposed joint French-Cambodian operations against enemy.

A. King and French had agreed two weeks ago that French units would serve under king's command in opposing the recent Viet Minh incursion of Cambodia.

B. Then few nationalistic advisers prodded by Buddhist monks (Bonzes) urged king repudiate agreement with French. They objected to any cooperation.

C. But king stood firm and on 4 April opposition finally yielded to his wishes. Therefore, king now proceeding to lead combined attack against

Viet Minh.

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XI.

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A. Actually Vietnam government eager build up army. Just created War Cabinet of four (led by Bao Dai) to press fight against Viet Minh. Issued call for total mobilization of all men between 20-25.

1. Already had limited conscription but new order is good psychological move.

B. But handicapped by fence-sitting Viets.

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C. French control training Viet army. Have failed make maximum effort. They hotly oppose US help.

D. Opposition of politico-religious warlord armies (totaling 26,000 troops) to integration been abetted by "divide and rule" encouragement from French.

E. However, last Saturday, newly created War Cabinet proclaimed integration these so-called "confessional armies." It remains to be seen if this order will be effective.

XII. Vietnamese regulars total some 129,000 troops, plus additional 29,000 National Guardsmen.

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- A. Vietnamese troops organized in battalion or smaller units; dispersed throughout Indochina: 56,000 in Tonkin, 50,000 in Annam, and 52,000 in Cochinchina.
- B. Combat efficiency low, owing lack experience, spotty morale, inadequate training, few good officers.
- C. These troops largely engaged static defense; brunt of any operations falls on French and colonial troops.
- D. Light battalion program begun last year resulted formation 55 units; 66 more tentatively planned this year. These units may eventually constitute striking force, but inadequate now.

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